

**TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND
TREE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
March 24, 2025**

A regular meeting of the Town of Sullivan's Island Tree Commission was held at 4:00 p.m. at Town Hall. All requirements of the Freedom of Information Act have been satisfied. Present were Commission members Madeline McGee, Derek Wade, Mark Miller and Milton Langley.

Members of the public present:

Members of Council: No members of Council were present.

Staff members present: Charles Drayton, Director of Planning and Zoning, Christina Oxford, Permit and Planning Assistant, and Rebecca Fanning, Director of Resilience & Natural Resource Management.

- I. CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Miller called the meeting to order and stated that the press and public were duly notified pursuant to State Law and a quorum of Commission Members was present. There were no known members of the media present.
- II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM February 24, 2024:** Mr. Milton made a motion to grant approval of the February 24, 2024, Tree Commission Meeting Minutes. Mr. Wade seconded this motion. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.

III. TREE REMOVAL REQUESTS:

2730 MIDDLE STREET (APPLICATION): Planet Green Landscaping, on behalf of the homeowners, Kevin and Tracy McDearis, requests to remove two (2) a Category 1, pine trees (20" DBH and 28" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-07-00-065) ([Supporting documentation](#))

Mr Drayton stated that pine trees are green year round so they work to clean the air and soak up storm water year round. Rebecca Fanning stated that they are a native host plant and mitigate 9,000 gallons of water. Kevin McDearis stated that the tree is leaning to one side and they are worried about the tree falling onto the home or falling into the street and hitting the neighbor's house. The Commission noted that there would still be lots of trees on the lot with 38% canopy coverage. Mr Milton was in favor of pruning rather than removing the tree.

No public comment was made.

Mr. Wade made a motion to grant approval for the application presented. Mr. Miller seconded this motion. Three were in favor. One opposed (M Langley). Motion passed.

2502 MYRTLE AVENUE (APPLICATION): Carter Helms, applicant on behalf of homeowner, Bridget Besaw, requests to remove a Category 1, pine tree (24" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-06-00-058)

Mr. Drayton stated that there is 56 ½% canopy coverage. The pine in question lends 5 ½ % coverage and so there would be enough canopy coverage with the pine's removal. The homeowner would like to remove the tree to create more sunlight for a garden. Mr Drayton stated that native hollies were planted that could be used in mitigation. Mr Milton stated that he does not want to remove the tree. Mr Helms stated that 40% of the other trees in the yard are live oaks.

No public comment was made.

The Commission members were in favor of the application presented.

Mr. Wade made a motion to grant approval of the tree. Ms. McGee seconded this motion. Three in favor. One opposed (M Langley). Motion passed.

313 STATION 30 (APPLICATION): Shanna Harris, applicant on behalf of the homeowner, David White, requests to remove a Category 1, laurel oak (18" DBH). The request is being made in accordance with Zoning Ordinance, Section 21-162 B (Application for tree relocation, or removal and replacement). (PIN# 529-07-00-035)

Mr. Drayton stated that arborist Shanna Harris found that the tree shows evidence of decline with a large bulge found at the division of stems that indicates an excessive amount of included bark. There is also evidence of decay in the lower half of the tree indicating a very weak attachment. The tree is also exhibiting 40% of dieback at the crown. Due to these factors, arborist intervention is not recommended. Mr Drayton also stated the tree lends only 2.61% of tree canopy and is surrounded by live oaks and so the canopy would be absorbed by the oaks. Staff recommends removal of the tree with ½ mitigation fee.

The Commission agreed the tree is not in good shape and the oaks would benefit from the space. They also agreed to the ½ tree mitigation fee.

Mr. Langley moved to approve the removal of the of the tree with ½ mitigation fee. Mr. Wade seconded the motion. All approved. None opposed. Motion passed.

IV. UPDATES FROM TOWN STAFF:

1. TOWN TREE REPLACEMENT LIST

Rebecca Fanning gave an update on the Town Tree Replacement List. Ms. Fanning stated that while the list offers many species suitable to a barrier island environment, some updates need to be considered to address concerns involving invasive species, as well as vulnerability of a few of those trees to disease and pests. Additional information, such as salt tolerance and ecosystem services would be useful to include in this update, as well.

Ms. Fanning also stated some trees on the Town Tree Replacement list are not native to North America and are currently listed as approved species for replacement. While some of these trees may not be invasive in our region yet or ever, nevertheless they detract from the Island's biodiversity.

Ms Fanning stated A few of the trees on the Replacement List are under attack from the invasive Asian Longhorn Beetle, which is not on the Island yet. We should not increase the density of Maples (*Acer spp.*) on the Island at this time, affecting two of the trees on the replacement list. Similarly, Red Bay (*Persea borbonia*) is also suffering in our region from an invasive beetle, which carries the laurel wilt disease. Finally, Hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*) is facing a few threats from the invasive Woolly aphid to a yet unidentified disease and should not be planted as a replacement tree.

Ms Fanning stated even without the non-native species, the list contains some 50+ tree species. A few additional species have been included in the working update to the Replacement Tree List: Devil's Walkingstick (*Aralia spinosa*) | Bull Pine (*Pinus elliottii*) | Carolina Willow (*Salix caroliniana*) Devil's Walkingstick is currently listed in the Tree Replacement List by scientific mis-name of the Toothache Tree (*Zanthoxylum clava-hercules*) and so was given its own entry. In the case of the willow and pine, other species from those genus are included on the list (Loblolly and Longleaf Pine, Black Willow), but Bull Pine and Carolina Willow are the more native to Sullivan's species.

Ms Fanning stated the current list helpfully outlines sun/shade requirements and some other basic growth considerations. It would be helpful to add salt tolerance, as well as drought and flood tolerance, as site conditions pose various challenges on the Island. Finally, using the USDA FS i-Tree analysis tools, estimations of gallons of flood water averted, pollution cleaned from the atmosphere, and other benefits may be useful to communicate. All of this information is already outlined in a spreadsheet, a small segment of which is included below as an example, but it is not in a format that would be easily digestible by the public at this time.

Staff recommends the removal of all non-native species from the Replacement Tree List as outlined above, as well as the four vulnerable natives (*Acer saccharim*, *Acer rubrum*, *Celtis laevigata*, and *Persea borbonia*), the inclusion of three additional native trees, and updating the table to include some useful information about salt tolerance, flood tolerance, and ecosystem services provided. This would turn the Tree Replacement List into a communication tool to promote tree plantings beyond mitigation requirements, and if executed beautifully could inspire residents to increase the Island tree canopy.

Ms. McGee made a motion to bring the plant list up to date. Mr. Miller seconded the motion. All approved. None opposed. The motion passed unanimously.

2. ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION 2025:

Mr. Drayton gave an update on the plans for the Arbor Day Celebration that will be held on April 25, 2025 at Stith Park. The event will include tree and plant giveaways, library activities and stormwater consultants will be available to answer questions. Ms Fanning presented the design for the 2025 Arbor Day T-shirt. The town has been designated Tree City USA for the 9th year in a row.

3. WINTER RC TRIMMING

Ms. Fanning gave an update on the wax myrtle removals, popcorn removals, and both wax myrtle and popcorn removals. Commission members expressed an interest in creating a town initiative to remove popcorn trees. It would need to be determined where the worst areas are located and how much it would cost to remove trees from those areas. A multi-year fund could be created with a percentage of dollars to be used in each year for popcorn removals.

4. 1743 Atlantic Oak Tree Update

Mr Drayton stated that it appears the tree has gone into shock since it was moved. Urban Forestry Works has been working to help the tree. They have found the irrigation system to the tree has been shut off twice. Security cameras have been installed to monitor the situation.

V. ADJOURN: Ms. McGee made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:24 p.m. All were in favor. None opposed. Motion passed unanimously.



Mark Miller, Chairman



Date